

Montgomery County Commission on Aging  
Mental Health and Older Adults  
2011 Summer Study Report

The Commission on Aging (COA) joined by representatives from the Commission on Health (COH), the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), the Montgomery County Mental Health Association (MHA) and Montgomery County government and non-government groups met over the summer to study mental and behavioral health services for older adults who reside in Montgomery County.

In addition to learning about some of the existing programs and resources for seniors, workgroup members reviewed barriers and challenges to providing mental health care for older adults, discussed practices and strategies to improve care and developed recommendations.

The purpose of this study was to learn more about Montgomery County's specialized mental health services for older adults. The Montgomery County agencies, departments and organizations that provide mental health services and support for residents have done a tremendous amount of work in this area, and the workgroup is grateful for the information and assistance they provided.

## **Workgroup Recommendations**

### **Education**

1. Promote National Depression Screening Day on an annual basis.
2. Collaborate with State licensing bodies to provide information (via mail or email) to County providers related to mental health and older adults.
3. Provide "Mental Health First Aid" courses for County employees and community members.
4. Support development of programs for older adults that focus on prevention including nutrition, exercise and feelings of "usefulness".
5. Provide emotional support and resource information for family and professional caregivers as well as volunteers who work with individuals and families with mental illness.
6. Encourage public and private providers to utilize existing programs for promoting the mental health and well being of older adults such as the SAMHSA publication, *Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for Senior Living Communities*.

### Funding

1. Increase public funding for senior mental health (See attachments A &B).
2. Advocate for funding and support of programs and services that promote social connectedness, leisure time activities, volunteerism and intergenerational activities.

### Legal

1. Consider a court-ordered Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) pilot program in Montgomery County and advocate for passage of AOT at the state level.
2. Review current State laws related to elder abuse and financial exploitation to determine if policy change is needed.

All recommendations are meant to be inclusive of the various ethnic groups that reside in Montgomery County.

### **The workgroup co-chairs request the Commission on Aging:**

- Endorse mental health as a priority and approve continuation of this important work in the Health and Wellness Committee;
- Advocate for development of programs for older adults that promote wellness and prevention including nutrition, exercise and feelings of "usefulness";
- Advocate for funding for senior mental health and support programs and services that promote social connectedness, leisure time activities, volunteerism and intergenerational activities;
- Approve collaboration with State licensing bodies to provide information (via mail or email) to County providers related to mental health and older adults; and
- Approve collaboration with the Public Policy Committee to address the legal recommendations of the workgroup.

This document will be presented to Dr. Raymond Crowell, Chief, Montgomery County Behavioral Health Services.

### **Presenters:**

1. Sybil Greenhut, Manager, Montgomery County Senior Mental Health
2. Bonnie Klem, Supervisor, Montgomery County Adult Protective Services
3. Eugene Morris, Manager, Montgomery County Access to Behavioral Health Services
4. Aileen Kroll, J.D., Legislative and Policy Counsel, Treatment Advocacy Center
5. Lauren Hochman, Director, Montgomery County Mental Health Association

The presenters did not develop or endorse the recommendations made by this workgroup. They provided information about existing programs and services.

## **Participants**

Myrna Cooperstein, Commission on Aging  
Beth Shapiro, Commission on Aging and Jewish Social Service Agency  
Joe Petrizzo, Commission on Aging/Holy Cross Hospital  
Paul Del Ponte, Commission on Aging  
Judith Levy, Commission on Aging  
Miriam Kelty, Commission on Aging  
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans, Commission on Aging  
Spencer Schron, Commission on Aging  
Tamara Duell, Commission on Aging  
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez, Commission on Aging  
Lawerence Epp, Commission on Health  
Odile Saddi, Area Agency on Aging  
Shawn Brennan, HHS, Senior Program Coordinator  
Katie Griffin, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
Carolyn Wanner, Mental Health Association  
Sarah Gotbaum, Older Women's League  
Jennifer Novak, Home Care Partners  
Alease Johnson, Suburban Hospital  
Charlotte King, Adventist Health Care  
Shannon Smith, Adventist Health Care  
Cynthia Cohen, Montgomery General Hospital  
Miriam Chase, HHS  
Perry Chan, HHS, Asian American Health Initiative  
Jamie Lok Weng, HHS, Asian American Health Initiative

### **In Attendance**

Patty Vitale, Chief of Staff to Councilmember George Leventhal

### **Submitted by:**

Tammy Duell and Judith Levy, Co-Chairs  
Health and Wellness Committee  
Montgomery County Commission on Aging  
September 2011